

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of claims:

Claim 1 (original): A method for inhibiting the crystallization of boric acid comprising the steps of dissolving a source of boric acid in water and a vitrifying agent selected from the group consisting of amino alcohols and amino acids to form an aqueous mixture and allowing the aqueous mixture to dry, thereby forming a vitreous boric acid-containing residue.

Claim 2 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the mole ratio of the vitrifying agent to boric acid is above about 0.25:1 and below about 1:1 and wherein the aqueous mixture is applied to a surface of a substrate before it is allowed to dry, thereby forming a vitreous boric acid-containing residue on and/or in the substrate.

Claim 3 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the mole ratio of the vitrifying agent to boric acid is in the range of from about 0.3:1 to about 1:1.

Claim 4 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the vitrifying agent is selected from the group consisting of 2-amino-2-methyl-1-propanol, ethanolamine, tris(hydroxymethyl)aminomethane, 5-aminopentanol, and lysine.

Claim 5 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the boric acid-containing residue is a solid.

Claim 6 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the boric acid-containing residue is a viscous fluid.

Claim 7 (original): The method according to claim 1 wherein the aqueous mixture is applied to cotton batting, wood, wood products, engineered wood, paper, cellulose insulation or gypsum wallboard.

Claim 8 (original): The method according to claim 2 wherein the vitreous boric acid-containing residue forms a coating on the surface of the substrate.

Claim 9 (original): The method according to claim 8 wherein the coating is a hard vitreous boric acid-containing layer.

Claim 10 (original): The method according to claim 8 wherein the coating is a tacky vitreous boric acid-containing layer.

Claim 11 (original): The method according to claim 2 wherein the aqueous mixture penetrates into the substrate and dries within the substrate, thereby depositing a vitreous boric acid-containing residue within the substrate.

Claim 12 (original): A method for protecting a combustible material against fire comprising the steps of: (a) dissolving a source of boric acid in water and a vitrifying agent selected from the group consisting of amino alcohols and amino acids to form an aqueous mixture; (b) applying the aqueous mixture to a surface of the combustible material; and (c) allowing the aqueous mixture to dry such that a vitreous boric acid-containing residue is deposited on the surface of the combustible material and/or within the combustible material, thereby enhancing the fire retardant nature of the combustible material.

Claim 13 (original): The method according to claim 12 wherein the combustible material is cotton batting.

Claim 14 (original): The method according to claim 13 wherein the cotton batting is heated after the aqueous mixture is applied.

Claim 15 (original): A fire retardant article comprising a combustible material and further comprising a vitreous boric acid-containing residue, prepared according to the method of claim 12.

Claim 16 (original): A method for protecting wood or lignocellulosic-based products against decay and insect attack comprising the steps of: (a) dissolving a source of boric acid in water and a vitrifying agent selected from the group consisting of amino alcohols and amino acids to form an aqueous mixture; (b) applying the aqueous mixture to the wood or lignocellulosic-based product; (c) allowing the aqueous mixture to penetrate into the wood or lignocellulosic-based product; and (d) allowing the aqueous mixture to dry within the substrate, depositing a vitreous boric acid-containing residue, thereby providing protection against decay and insect attack.

Claim 17 (original): An article comprising wood or lignocellulosic-based material and further comprising a vitreous boric acid-containing residue, prepared according to the method of claim 16.

Claim 18 (currently amended): ~~An aqueous~~The composition comprising boric acid,
according to claim 21 wherein the vitrifying agent is 2-amino-2-methyl-1-propanol and water
~~wherein the mole ratio of 2-amino-2-methyl-1-propanol to boric acid is above about 0.25:1 and~~
~~below about 1:1.~~

Claim 19 (original): The composition of claim 18 wherein the concentration of boric acid is in the range of about 35% to 57% by weight.

Claim 20 (original): The composition of claim 19 wherein the mole ratio of 2-amino-2-methyl-1-propanol to boric acid is at least about 0.3:1 and the concentration of boric acid is up to about 50% by weight.

Claim 21 (original): An aqueous composition comprising boric acid, a vitrifying agent and water wherein the vitrifying agent is selected from the group consisting of 2-amino-2-methyl-1-propanol, tris(hydroxymethyl)aminomethane, 5-aminopentanol, and lysine and the mole ratio of the vitrifying agent to boric acid is above about 0.25:1 and below about 1:1.

Claims 22-23 (canceled)